

Before the Word was written, said the *Hind*,
 Our Saviour preach'd his Faith to human Kind :
 From his Apostles the first Age receiv'd
 Eternal truth, and what they taught believ'd.
 Thus by Tradition Faith was planted first ;
 Succeeding Flocks succeeding Pastors nurs'd.
 This was the way our wise Redeemer chose,
 (Who sure could all things for the best dispose)
 To fence his Fold from their encroaching Foes.
 He cou'd have writ himself, but well foresaw
 Th' event wou'd be like that of *Moses' Law* ;
 Some difference wou'd arise, some doubts remain,
 Like those, which yet the jarring *Jews* maintain.
 No written Laws can be so plain, so pure,
 But Wit may gloss, and Malice may obscure ;
 Not those indited by his first Command,
 A Prophet grav'd the Text, an Angel held his Hand.
 Thus Faith was ere the written Word appear'd,
 And Men believ'd, not what they read, but heard.
 But since th' Apostles cou'd not be confin'd
 To these, or those, but severally design'd
 Their large Commission round the World to blow ;
 To spread their Faith, they spread their Labours too.
 Yet still their absent Flock their Pains did share ;
 They hearken'd still, for Love produces Care.
 And as mistakes arose, or discords fell,
 Or bold Seducers taught 'em to Rebel,
 As Charity grew cold, or Faction hot,
 Or long neglect their Lessons had forgot,
 For all their Wants they wisely did provide,
 And Preaching by Epistles was supply'd :
 So great Physicians cannot all attend,
 But some they visit, and to some they send.